

Testimony of Rick Melita
Before the Labor and Public Employees Committee
March 8, 2018

Members of the Committee, my name is name is Rick Melita, and I am the Director of the Service Employees International Union Connecticut State Council, representing over 65,000 employees in the building service, public and health care sectors.

SEIU vigorously supports the bills being heard today specifically:

S.B. No. 1 AN ACT CONCERNING EARNED FAMILY AND MEDICAL LEAVE.

S.B. No. 15 AN ACT CONCERNING FAIR AND EQUAL PAY FOR EQUAL WORK.

H.B. No. 5386 AN ACT CONCERNING VARIOUS PAY EQUITY AND FAIRNESS MATTERS.

H.B. No. 5387 AN ACT CONCERNING PAID FAMILY MEDICAL LEAVE.

H.B. No. 5388 AN ACT CONCERNING A FAIR MINIMUM WAGE

SEIU represents thousands of lower wage hard working men and women in various types of jobs: janitors, home health aides, child care workers, nursing home aides, bus drivers.

Working families deserve a raise, the ability to care for a sick loved one without risking financial catastrophe, and ensure that women deserve to be paid fairly for the work they do.

As far as I know there are only 3 ways for low wage workers to get ahead - through market forces, through collective bargaining, and by government intervention. Over the last 40 years, market forces have kept wages low for every one but the ultra wealthy. While SEIU and other unions have worked diligently to improve the wages and working conditions for these workers, those efforts have resulted in unions being subjected to attack by corporate and right wing interests. Whether it is cases in the Supreme Court bankrolled by the Koch brothers, or the 1% commission here in Connecticut trying to shovel more money into the bank accounts of millionaires and their heirs paid for changing collective bargaining, unions have been assailed.

That leaves government as a tool to help workers achieve a better life. Unfortunately the recent federal tax cut marketed as a way to give American a raise has- to the surprise of no one - resulted in a few dollars a week going to working families while corporations and the ultra rich are netting billions. Rather than tilt the playing field further and further toward the most fortunate among us- better government policy would be to raise minimum standards for the less wealthy. That means raising the minimum wage and allowing workers time off with pay to deal with family issues.

On the issue of fair pay for women according to the Institute for Women's Policy Research

Women are almost half of the workforce. They are the sole or co-breadwinner in half of American families with children. They receive more college and graduate degrees than men. Yet, on average, women continue to earn considerably less than men. In 2015, female full-time, year-round workers made only 80 cents for every dollar earned by men, a gender wage gap of 20 percent.

I urge you to consider and pass these important bills. Our state needs them and our workers and our families deserve them.